



BATTLER BRITTON in

JUNGLE SNATCH

A combined operation—to beat
the jungle and the Japanese.



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BATTLER BRITTON in

Jungle Snatch

IN 1943, THE BRITISH FORCES IN BURMA WERE STRIKING BACK AT THE JAPANESE. GUERRILLA RAIDS BY CHINDIT COLUMNS HAD GONE DEEP INTO ENEMY TERRITORY, TO CUT COMMUNICATIONS, UNDERMINE MORALE, AND INFLICT DAMAGE AND CONFUSION...

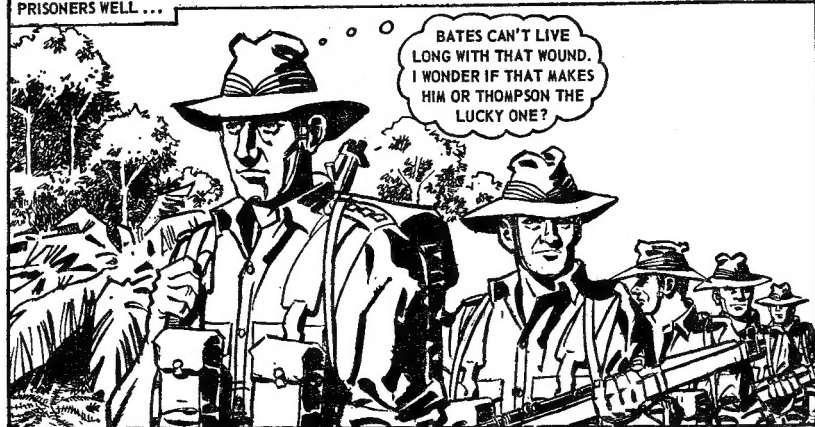


Chapter I. *CHINDIT COLUMN*

BUT THE MORALE OF MEN ON SUCH OPERATIONS HAD BEEN AFFECTED BY ONE FACT - THOSE WHO WERE WOUNDED HAD TO BE LEFT BEHIND...



THE COLUMNS HAD TO MOVE FAST AND SECRETLY AND THEY WERE HUNDREDS OF MILES FROM THEIR OWN LINES. BUT IT WAS A GRIM BUSINESS, THE JAPANESE WERE NOT NOTED FOR TREATING THEIR PRISONERS WELL ...



THE SUPPLYING OF SUCH COLUMNS WAS DONE FROM THE AIR, A DIFFICULT TASK WHEN THE DROPPING ZONE WAS OFTEN A TINY CLEARING IN A VAST CARPET OF JUNGLE...



THE ALLIED COMMANDERS IN THE FAR EAST SOON REALISED THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF AIR AND GROUND CO-OPERATION, AND WHEN A NEW CHINDIT OPERATION WAS MOUNTED THE R.A.F. SENT AS ITS REPRESENTATIVE ONE OF ITS MOST FAMOUS PILOTS...



THE AIRCRAFT ROLLED TO A STOP AND WING COMMANDER 'BATTLER' BRITTON CLIMBED FROM IT ...



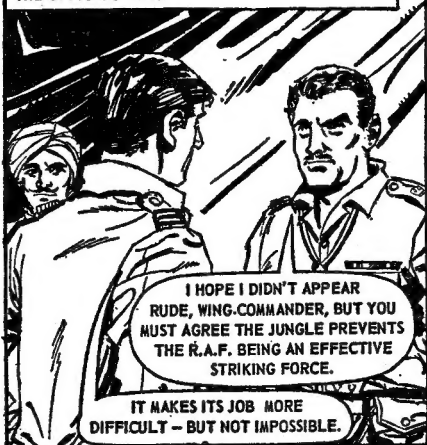
BUT LIEUTENANT-COLONEL WAGNER, THE ARMY LIASON OFFICER, DID NOT APPEAR TO REJOICE OVER THE CHOICE OF BATTLER BRITTON AS HIS OPPOSITE NUMBER...



BUT AS THE R.A.F. IS NOT GOING TO DO ANY FIGHTING IN THIS OPERATION AN ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER MIGHT HAVE BEEN BETTER SUITED.



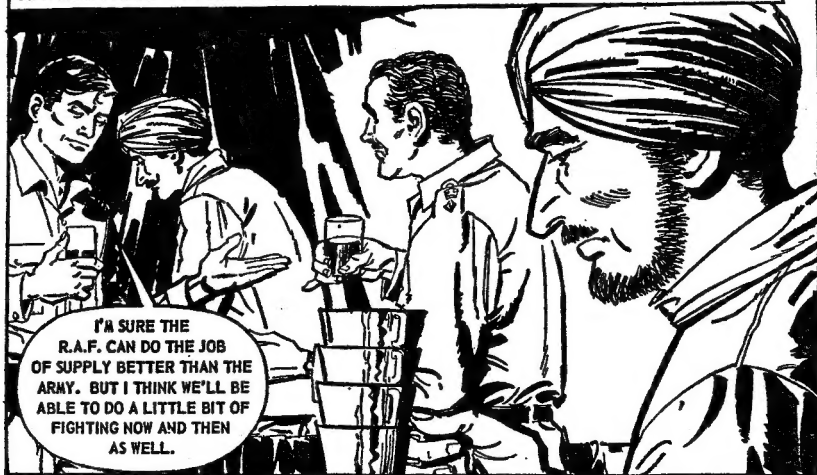
THE CHINDIT COLUMN WAS ENCAMPED IN A JUNGLE CLEARING. WAGNER SHOWED BATTLER HIS TENT, AND WHEN THEY HAD CHANGED TOOK HIM ACROSS TO THE OFFICERS' MESS.



I HOPE I DIDN'T APPEAR RUDE, WING-COMMANDER, BUT YOU MUST AGREE THE JUNGLE PREVENTS THE R.A.F. BEING AN EFFECTIVE STRIKING FORCE.

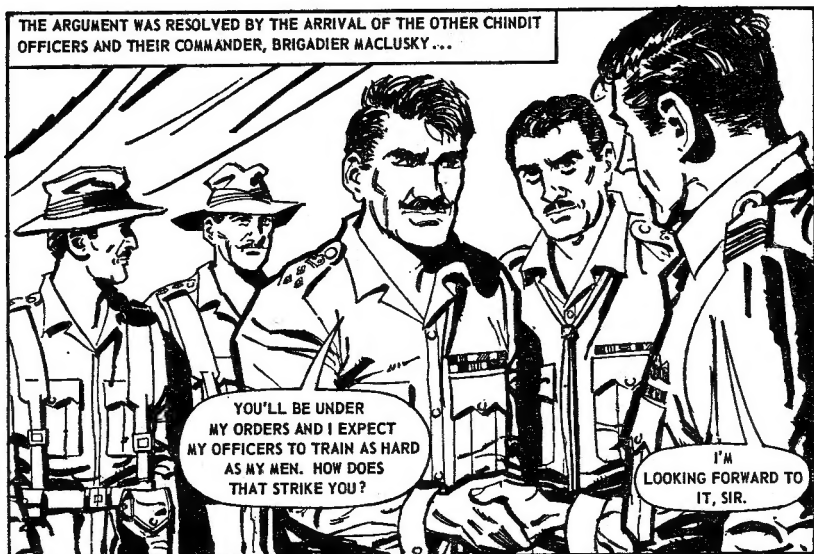
IT MAKES ITS JOB MORE DIFFICULT - BUT NOT IMPOSSIBLE.

BUT WAGNER WAS CONVINCED THAT THE ARMY MUST BE THE FIGHTING FORCE AND THE R.A.F. SHOULD BE USED ONLY FOR SUPPLY PURPOSES...



I'M SURE THE R.A.F. CAN DO THE JOB OF SUPPLY BETTER THAN THE ARMY. BUT I THINK WE'LL BE ABLE TO DO A LITTLE BIT OF FIGHTING NOW AND THEN AS WELL.

THE ARGUMENT WAS RESOLVED BY THE ARRIVAL OF THE OTHER CHINDIT OFFICERS AND THEIR COMMANDER, BRIGADIER MACLUSKY ...



BATTLER FOUND OUT JUST WHAT THE BRIGADIER MEANT ...



TWO JUNIOR R.A.F. OFFICERS, FLIGHT LIEUTENANT MILLS AND FLYING OFFICER LONGFORD, WERE ALSO ATTACHED TO THE COLUMN...



SOME OF THE SOLDIERS IN THE COLUMN WERE NATIVES OF BURMA. KAREN TRIBESMEN FROM THE SOUTH, AND KACHINS FROM THE NORTH. AND THESE WERE THEIR INSTRUCTORS IN THE JUNGLE TRAINING...



THE KACHIN SLICED THROUGH A HUGE PIECE OF CANE IN HALF A DOZEN WRISTY SLASHES, GIVING THEM A LECTURE ON THE VALUE OF BAMBOO AS HE DID SO...

BAMBOO MAKES RAFTS AND HUTS TO LIVE IN. BETWEEN THE JOINTS IT IS HOLLOW - YOU CAN MAKE A BOTTLE OF ONE PIECE. OH - AND BAMBOO SHOOTS ARE GOOD FOOD.



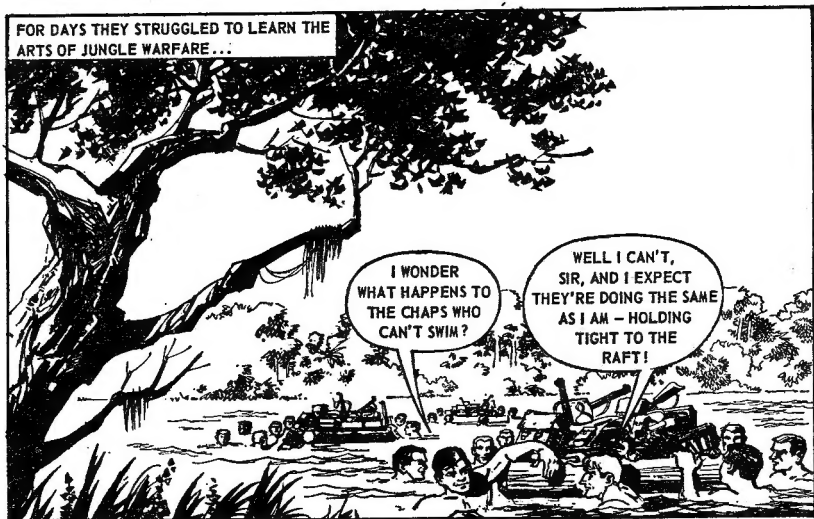
IN THE HANDS OF THE KACHIN THERE SEEMED LITTLE INDEED THAT BAMBOO WOULD NOT DO. HE EVEN USED IT TO MAKE WEAPONS...



THAT'S GONE
ABOUT THREE INCHES INTO
THE TREE!

THAT'S AN
EXTREMELY USEFUL
WEAPON.

FOR DAYS THEY STRUGGLED TO LEARN THE ARTS OF JUNGLE WARFARE...



I WONDER
WHAT HAPPENS TO
THE CHAPS WHO
CAN'T SWIM?

WELL I CAN'T,
SIR, AND I EXPECT
THEY'RE DOING THE SAME
AS I AM - HOLDING
TIGHT TO THE
RAFT!

SLOWLY BUT SURELY THEY BUILT UP THE STRENGTH AND STAMINA THAT WOULD HOLD THEM IN GOOD STEAD IN THE WEEKS TO COME...



BUT BATTLER NEVER FORGOT HIS OWN PARTICULAR PROBLEM. HE WAS DETERMINED THAT THE R.A.F. SHOULD PLAY A MORE DECISIVE PART IN THE OPERATION...



BATTLER LET THE QUESTION GO UNANSWERED AND A DAY LATER HE ASKED FOR AN INTERVIEW WITH THE BRIGADIER...

YOU DON'T WANT LONGFORD TO COME WITH US, EH? I WAS BEGINNING TO WONDER IF HE WAS UP TO IT.

IT'S NOT THAT, SIR. I THINK HE CAN HELP MOST IN ANOTHER CAPACITY, SIR.

MACLUSKY REALISED THAT THE WING COMMANDER WAS UP TO SOMETHING, BUT HE DID NOT QUESTION HIM FURTHER.

A FEW DAYS LATER BATTLER WAS MAKING HIS FINAL ARRANGEMENTS WITH THE COMMANDERS OF THE DAKOTA SQUADRONS...

WE'RE ALL READY TO GO.

YOU ASK FOR IT AND WE'LL DROP IT - ANYWHERE YOU TELL US TO!

THE FOLLOWING MORNING THE COLUMN MOVED OUT. THEY DROVE DOWN PAST IMPHAL AND OVER THE ASSAM BORDER INTO BURMA. THERE THEY LEFT THEIR TRUCKS...

FROM NOW ON WE LIVE ON OUR HUMPS, OR ON THE JUNGLE AND WHAT THE AIR FORCE CAN BRING US.

WE WON'T LET YOU DOWN, SIR.

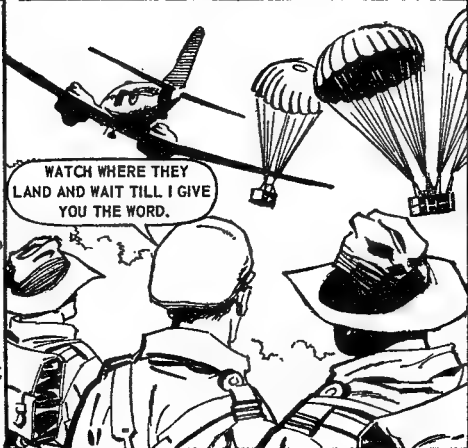
THE CHINDWIN RIVER WAS THE FIRST BARRIER THEY HAD TO CROSS ...



THEY MOVED AWAY FROM THE RIVER AS FAST AS THEY COULD, CAREFULLY CONCEALING THEIR TRACKS...



SOON IT WAS TIME FOR THE FIRST SUPPLY DROP. BATTLEER AND SAM MILLS SELECTED A GOOD PIECE OF OPEN GROUND AND CALLED IN THE DAKOTAS ON THE WIRELESS...



THEY DISTRIBUTED THE SUPPLIES AND MARCHED ON. THEY WERE MOVING THROUGH TEAK FOREST NOW, WHERE THE GOING WAS EASY, AND THE HUGE FLAT LEAVES KEPT THE SUN FROM THEIR BACKS...

THE DAY MUST COME WHEN WE ARE FLOWN IN. DON'T YOU AGREE, WING COMMANDER?

IT'S NOT POSSIBLE AT THE MOMENT. THERE JUST AREN'T ENOUGH AIRCRAFT OUT HERE.

THE NEXT DAY THEY FOUND THAT A JAP PATROL HAD CROSSED THEIR PATH...

ELEPHANT TRACKS - THE JAPS USE 'EM FOR TRANSPORT. ABOUT FIFTY JAPS PASSED THIS WAY YESTERDAY.

WELL, I'M NOT GOING TO CHASE THEM - BUT TELL THE SCOUTS.

THE BRIGADIER WAS NOT ANXIOUS TO DRAW THE ATTENTION OF THE JAPS TO HIS COLUMN SO EARLY IN ITS OPERATION, BUT EVENTS LATER THAT DAY FORCED HIS HAND...

THEY'VE CIRCLED ROUND! THEY'RE GOING THE SAME WAY AS US, SIR!

IT WON'T BE LONG BEFORE THEY FIND OUT WE'RE HERE. THE SOONER WE STRIKE THE BETTER!

THROUGHOUT THAT DAY THE COLUMN
STALKED THE JAPANESE FORCE...

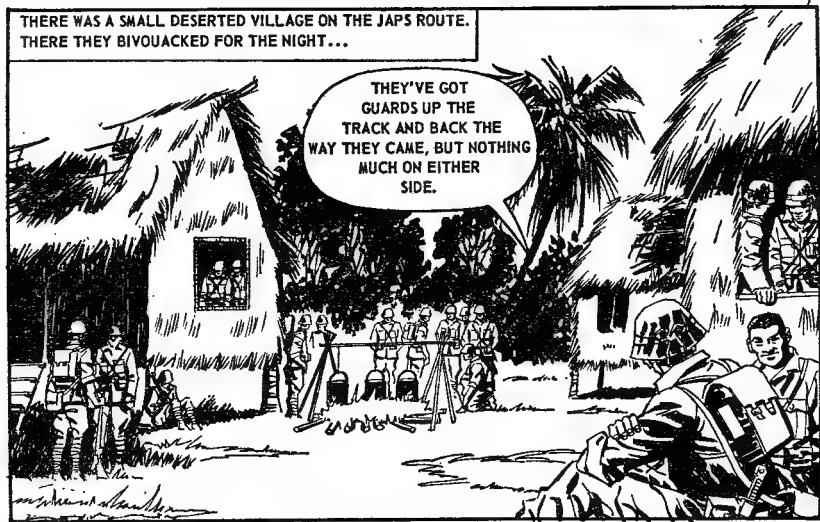
HALF A DOZEN
LIGHT MACHINE GUNS
AND MAYBE A COUPLE
OF MORTARS.

I'LL TELL THE
BRIGADIER.



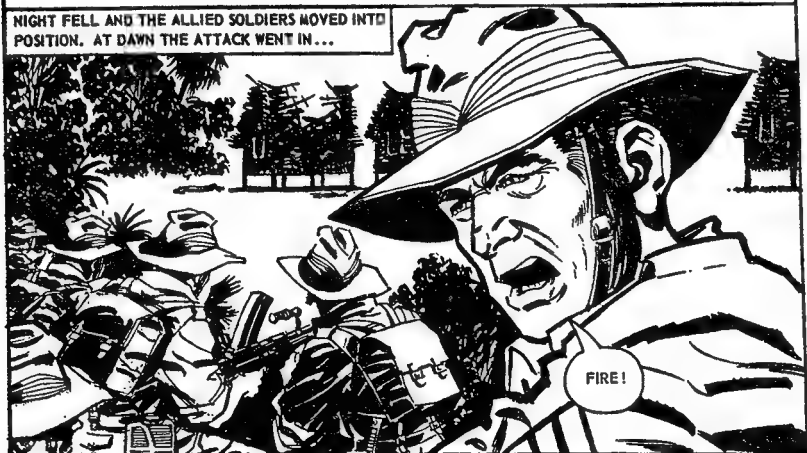
THERE WAS A SMALL DESERTED VILLAGE ON THE JAPS ROUTE.
THERE THEY BIVOUACKED FOR THE NIGHT...

THEY'VE GOT
GUARDS UP THE
TRACK AND BACK THE
WAY THEY CAME, BUT NOTHING
MUCH ON EITHER
SIDE.

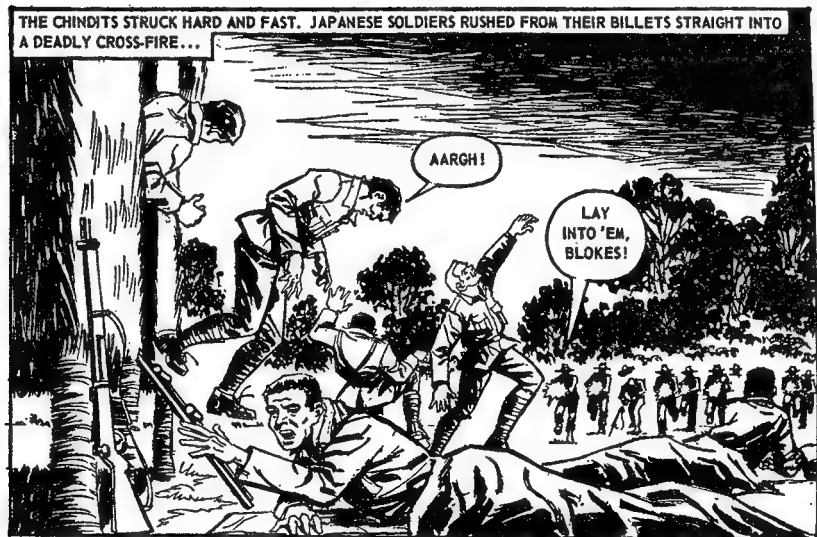


Chapter 2. *AMBUSH*

NIGHT FELL AND THE ALLIED SOLDIERS MOVED INTO POSITION. AT DAWN THE ATTACK WENT IN...



THE CHINDITS STRUCK HARD AND FAST. JAPANESE SOLDIERS RUSHED FROM THEIR BILLETTS STRAIGHT INTO A DEADLY CROSS-FIRE...



BATTLER HAD BEEN FORCED TO ACCEPT THE ROLE OF SPECTATOR IN AN OUTLYING POSITION, BUT SUDDENLY, THE ACTION VEERED IN HIS DIRECTION...



THE GREAT BEASTS CAME OUT OF THE JUNGLE IN A PACK. TRUMPETING THEIR RAGE AND FEAR THEY THUNDERED TOWARDS BATTLER AND HIS COMPANIONS...



ONE OF THE ELEPHANTS CHARGED INTO A SMALL TREE. THE SLENDER TRUNK SPLINTERED AND ONE OF THE SOLDIERS WAS FELLED BY THE TOPMOST BRANCHES...



AS THE NOISE OF THE ELEPHANTS' PASSAGE FADED INTO THE DISTANCE, BATTLE'S PARTY WERE JOINED BY THE REST OF THE RAIDERS...



THEN BATTLE SPOKE UP...



A WIRELESS MESSAGE FLASHED BACK
TO AN AERODROME IN ASSAM ...

SIGNAL FOR
YOU, SIR. TWO
L-FIVES WANTED
STRAIGHTAWAY.

COME ON,
SERGEANT, WE'VE
GOT SOMETHING TO
DO - NOT LIKE THIS
IDLE LOT.

MINUTES LATER TWO STINSON SENTINELS LIFTED
INTO THE AIR AND SET COURSE FOR BURMA ...

SOONER THEM
THAN ME - NOT
A GUN BETWEEN
THEM.

YES - BUT
ALGY'S NOT THE
CLOT HE PRETENDS
TO BE.

MEANWHILE BATTLER WAS SUPERVISING THE
LEVELLING OF THE VILLAGE CLEARING...

THE AMERICANS HAVE
JUST BROUGHT SOME OF
THESE PLANES OUT HERE AND
I GOT HOLD OF A COUPLE.
THEY'VE GOT A VERY SHORT
TAKE-OFF RUN.

THEY'LL
NEED TO
HAVE!



ALGY LONGFORD KEPT THE LITTLE
PLANES ONLY A FEW FEET ABOVE
THE TOPS OF THE TREES TO AVOID
DETECTION. BUT IT MADE NAVIGATION
DIFFICULT...

NOW
WHERE'S THAT
CHINDWIN
RIVER?



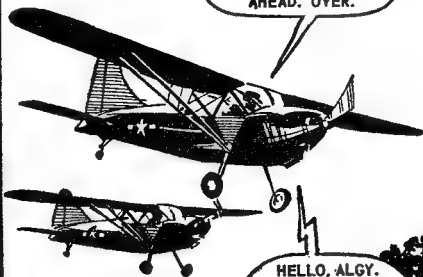
THE EMERGENCY AIRSTRIP WAS READY AND
BATTLER TRIED TO CONTACT ALGY...

HOW DO
YOU HEAR ME?
THIS IS BATTLER.
OVER—NOTHING
YET.



SUDDENLY BATTLER MADE CONTACT...

LOUD AND CLEAR,
BATTLER. YES. I CAN
SEE SOME PADDY FIELDS
AHEAD. OVER.



HELLO, ALGY.
TAKE A BEARING
ONE-ONE-ZERO FROM
THE PADDY AND KEEP
YOUR EYES SKINNED.
OVER.

THEY WERE SOME FIVE MILES IN FROM THE PADDY FIELDS WHEN ALGY
SPOTTED THE SIGNAL FLARE...

GOT YOU,
SIR! CRIKEY!
IT'S NOT EXACTLY
AN AIRPORT.
IS IT?



ALGY CAME IN ON A LONG APPROACH WITH ONLY LIGHT THROTTLE, DROPPING IN JUST OVER THE TREES...

JUST
RIGHT! GOOD OLD
ALGY.

I HOPE
HE'S GOT ROOM
TO STOP.



ALGY WAS BRAKING HARD AS SOON AS HE HAD THE AIRCRAFT ON THE GROUND, BUT EVEN THEN HE HAD TO SWING ROUND TO STOP IT RUNNING INTO THE TREES.

WELL
DONE,
ALGY.

GOT THEM IN
HERE, SIR. BUT
THERE'S JUST ONE
SMALL POINT - DO YOU
THINK WE CAN GET
THEM OUT?



IT WAS A RISK - AND BATTLER KNEW IT. SO HE DECIDED THAT HE SHOULD BE THE FIRST TO MAKE THE ATTEMPT...

THIS WAS MY IDEA SO IF ANY NECK'S GOING TO BE BROKEN, IT HAD BETTER BE MINE!



THE TRACK LEAVING THE CLEARING PROVIDED THE ONLY GAP IN THE TREES, AND AS BATTLER TAXIED BACK, MEMBERS OF THE CHINDIT COLUMNS WERE STILL FELLING TREES ON EITHER SIDE OF THIS VITAL SPACE...

THAT GIVES HIM A FEW MORE FEET.

HE'LL NEED EVERY INCH OF IT.

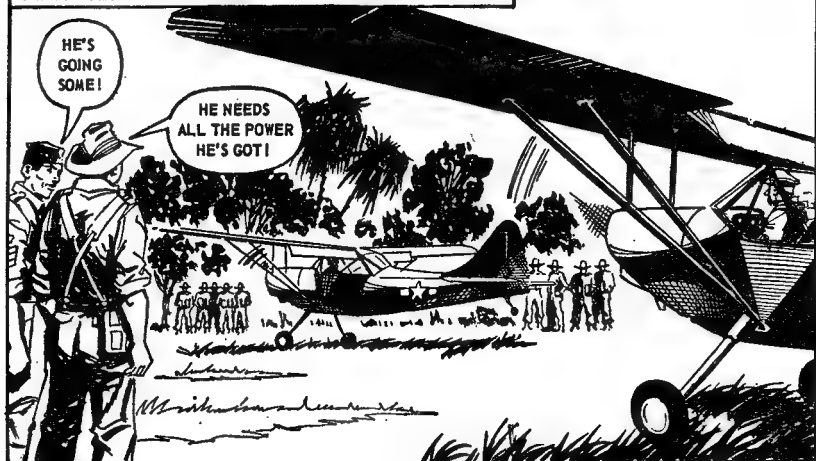


BATTLER SWUNG THE TINY PLANE ROUND. THEN HE STOOD ON THE BRAKES AND OPENED THE THROTTLE...

COME ON, MY BEAUTY - YOU CAN DO IT.



AS HE RELEASED THE BRAKES THE AIRCRAFT SURGED FORWARD.
EVERY EYE IN THE CLEARING WAS WATCHING IT AND MEASURING
THE RAPIDLY DECREASING DISTANCE TO THE TREES AT THE END...



AT THE LAST SECOND BATTLER HAULED BACK ON THE JOYSTICK.
THE TINY CRAFT ZOOMED UPWARDS JUST CLEARING THE TREE-TOPS...



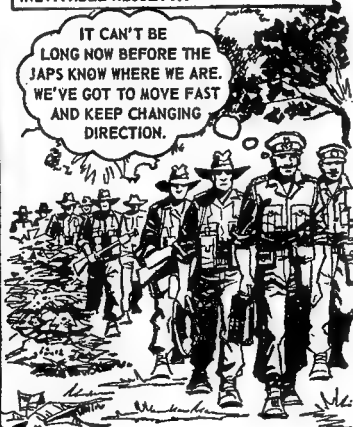
THE CLEARING EXPLODED INTO CHEERS AND SHOUTS OF JOY...



ALGY TOOK OFF STRAIGHT AFTER BATTLER. THEY RETURNED LATER. THE STRIP HAD BEEN LENGTHENED AND THE CHINDITS WERE ALREADY MOVING OUT...



BRIGADIER MACLUSKY SWUNG THE COLUMN TO THE SOUTH SOON AFTER THEY HAD LEFT THE CLEARING. THE ENGAGEMENT THERE HAD BEEN AN OUTSTANDING SUCCESS BUT IT WOULD HAVE ONE INEVITABLE RESULT...



THE NEED FOR SPEED AND THE AVOIDANCE OF
OBVIOUS ROUTES MADE THE GOING TOUGH...

ALL
RIGHT,
ALGY?

YES, SIR.
BUT BY JINGO
THESE PONGOS SET A
CRACKING PACE!

MANY TIMES THEY SEEMED TO BE FORGING ROUTES
WHERE NO MAN HAD BEEN BEFORE...

COME ON,
YOU STUPID LUMP
OF HORSE FLESH -
MOVE!

BUT THE JUNGLE WAS THEIR WORST ENEMY -
AN ALMOST IMPENETRABLE MASS OF FOLIAGE...



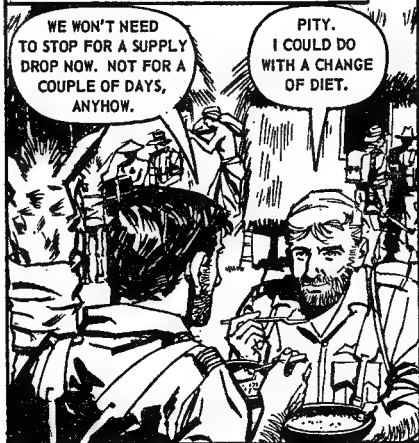
THE MAP
SAYS THERE'S ONLY
ANOTHER QUARTER MILE
OF THIS.

THAT'S
A QUARTER
MILE TOO FAR,
MATE!

THEY CAME ACROSS ONE VILLAGE, DEEP IN THE
JUNGLE, WHERE ITS INHABITANTS HOPED TO
ESCAPE THE JAPANESE. THEY BOUGHT RICE
FROM THE VILLAGERS FOR THEMSELVES AND
FEED FOR THE MULES...

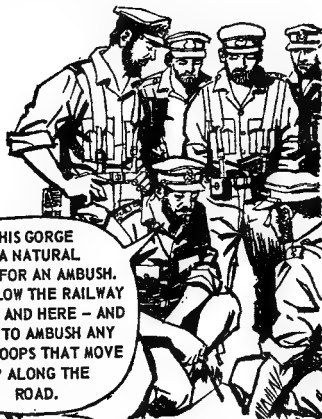
WE WON'T NEED
TO STOP FOR A SUPPLY
DROP NOW. NOT FOR A
COUPLE OF DAYS,
ANYHOW.

PITY.
I COULD DO
WITH A CHANGE OF
DIET.



THEIR OBJECTIVE WAS NEAR NOW. BRITISH AND
INDIAN TROOPS OF THE FOURTEENTH ARMY WERE
ABOUT TO LAUNCH AN ATTACK ON THE JAPS'
FRONT LINE. THE COLUMN'S TASK WAS TO CUT
THE ROAD AND RAILWAY THAT WAS SUPPLYING
THAT PART OF THE JAPS' FRONT...

THIS GORGE
IS A NATURAL
PLACE FOR AN AMBUSH.
SO WE BLOW THE RAILWAY
HERE - AND HERE - AND
HOPE TO AMBUSH ANY
JAP TROOPS THAT MOVE
UP ALONG THE
ROAD.



BATTLER AND ALGY WERE ASSIGNED TO THE AMBUSH PARTY. ALONG WITH BRITISH AND GURKHA SOLDIERS THEY CRAWLED INTO POSITION ON THE SIDE OF THE GORGE...



FARTHER UP THE ROAD SAPPERS WERE MINING THE WHOLE OF ONE SIDE OF THE GORGE, WHILE OTHERS WERE CREEPING UP ON THE BRIDGE, READY TO DO THE SAME THERE AT NIGHTFALL...



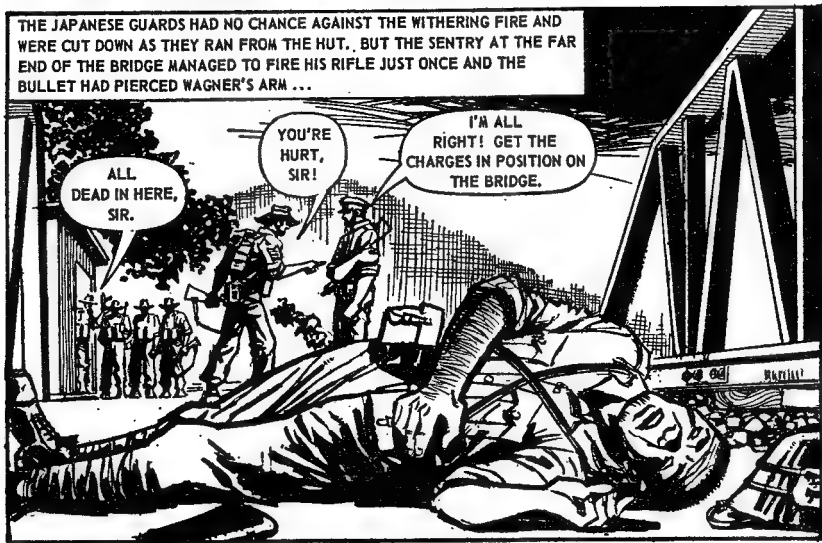
NIGHT FELL SWIFTLY. THE GUARD AT THE NEAR END OF THE BRIDGE KNEW NOTHING OF HIS ENEMY'S APPROACH TILL AN ARM CLAMPED ITSELF ACROSS HIS THROAT ...



WAGNER AND HIS SERGEANT CREPT ACROSS THE BRIDGE TO DEAL WITH THE OTHER SENTRY, BUT BEFORE THEY GOT THERE THE DOOR OF THE GUARD HUT OPENED ...



THE JAPANESE GUARDS HAD NO CHANCE AGAINST THE WITHERING FIRE AND WERE CUT DOWN AS THEY RAN FROM THE HUT. BUT THE SENTRY AT THE FAR END OF THE BRIDGE MANAGED TO FIRE HIS RIFLE JUST ONCE AND THE BULLET HAD PIERCED WAGNER'S ARM ...



THE WORK WENT ON THROUGHOUT THE NIGHT AND THEN TOWARDS DAWN THE ORDER WAS GIVEN AND A GREAT ORANGE FLASH LIT UP THE SKY...



THE CHINDITS ON THE SIDE OF THE GORGE HEARD - AND SAW - THE EXPLOSION AND SETTLED DOWN TO WAIT. THEY DID NOT WAIT LONG...



THE JAPS, HASTENING TO INVESTIGATE THE EXPLOSION AT THE BRIDGE, WERE WELL INTO THE GORGE WHEN THE TRAP WAS SPRUNG...



THE ROAR OF THE EXPLOSION STILL FILLED THE AIR WHEN THE LIP OF THE GORGE ERUPTED IN A VICIOUS TORRENT OF LEAD AND GRENADES...



FEW OF THE JAPANESE ESCAPED FROM THE ROAD, BUT ONE SMALL PARTY GAINED THE SHELTER OF THE HILLSIDE AND BROUGHT A MACHINE GUN INTO ACTION...



UNDER COVER OF THE GUN, BATTLEUR SAW OTHER JAPANESE ESCAPING DOWN THE ROAD...

THE JUNGLE THINNED OUT AT THE BASE OF THE SLOPE SO THAT THERE WAS NOT ENOUGH COVER TO GET REALLY CLOSE. THEY HURLED THEIR GRENADES THEN RAN FORWARD...



THE MACHINE GUNNER HAD DIED IN THE BLAST, BUT HIS TWO COMPANIONS WERE VERY MUCH ALIVE...

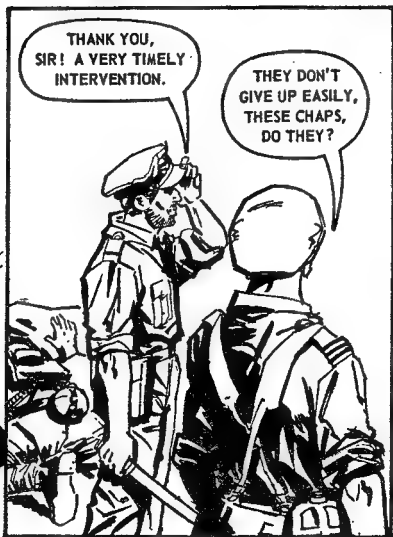


THE REMAINING JAP CHARGED FORWARD AND ALGY WAS STRUCK TO THE GROUND WITH THE RIFLE BUTT. THEN, BATTLER'S REVOLVER CRACKLED...



THANK YOU, SIR! A VERY TIMELY INTERVENTION.

THEY DON'T GIVE UP EASILY, THESE CHAPS, DO THEY?



Chapter 3. *COMBINED OPERATION*

CARRYING THEIR WOUNDED, THE COLUMN MOVED ON. AT ONE PLACE THE JUNGLE THINNED AND GAVE WAY TO SCRUB AND ELEPHANT GRASS, AN IDEAL SPOT FOR LANDING SUPPLIES AND THE AMBULANCE PLANES...



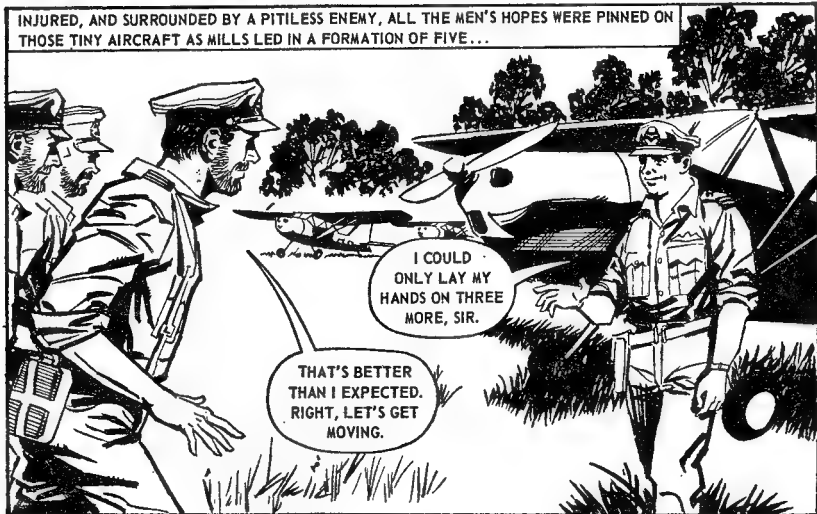
THE BRIGADIER WAS WORRIED NOW THAT THE JAPANESE WOULD FIND THEM IN THIS EXPOSED POSITION...



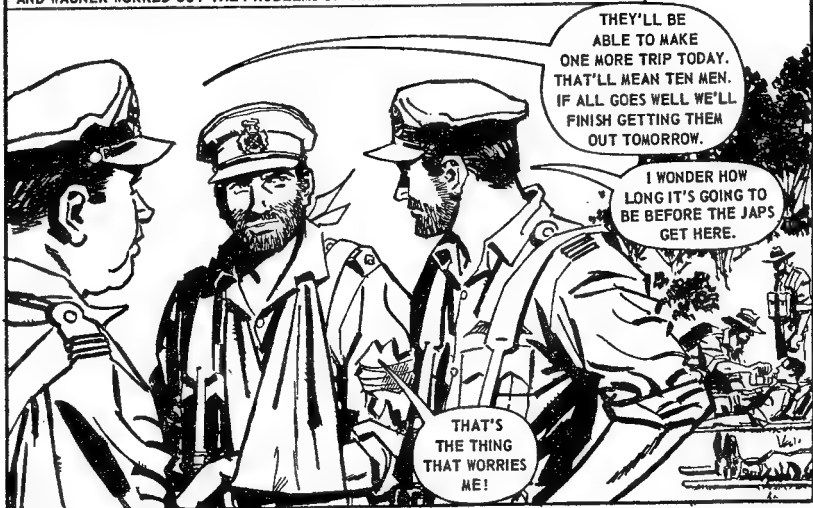
THE SUPPLIES WERE DROPPED AND DISTRIBUTED AND THE COLUMN MOVED OUT. BATTLER AND ALGY STAYED WITH THE PLATOON OF MEN TO HELP IN THE EVACUATION...



INJURED, AND SURROUNDED BY A PITILESS ENEMY, ALL THE MEN'S HOPES WERE PINNED ON THOSE TINY AIRCRAFT AS MILLS LED IN A FORMATION OF FIVE...



ALGY LONGFORD LED THE PLANES ON THEIR RETURN FLIGHT, WHILE MILLS, BATTLER AND WAGNER WORKED OUT THE PROBLEMS OF THEIR SITUATION...



JAPANESE GROUND TROOPS WERE NOT THE ONLY DANGER, AS BATTLER WELL KNEW. THE LIGHT AIRCRAFT WERE UNARMED AND COULD NOT HOPE TO ESCAPE IF ENEMY FIGHTERS SPOTTED THEM...



ONCE MORE THE LITTLE PLANES CAME AND WENT. DARKNESS FELL. BATTLER WAS TAKING HIS TURN ON GUARD DUTY WHEN WAGNER CAME TO SEE HIM...



WHEN THE L.5s RETURNED IT WAS
JUST AFTER FIRST LIGHT...

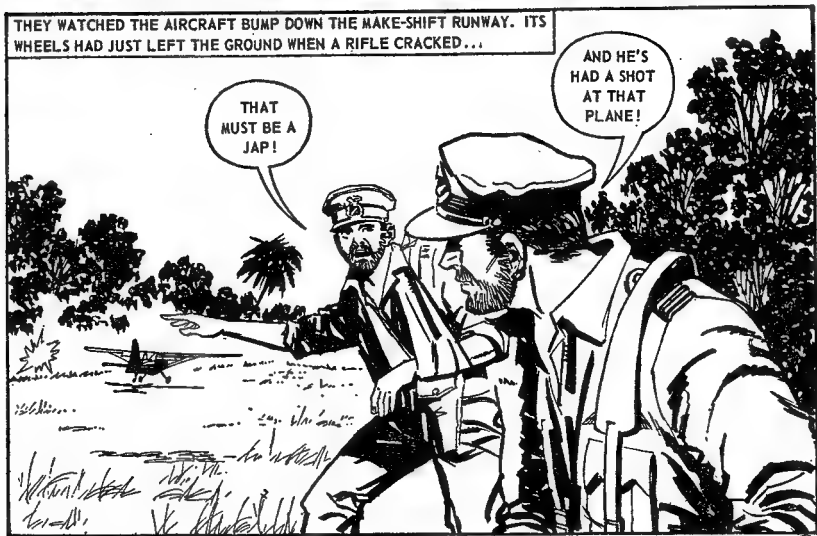
ONE MORE
TRIP, COLONEL.
THAT SHOULD
DO IT...



THEY WATCHED THE AIRCRAFT BUMP DOWN THE MAKE-SHIFT RUNWAY. ITS
WHEELS HAD JUST LEFT THE GROUND WHEN A RIFLE CRACKED...

THAT
MUST BE A
JAP!

AND HE'S
HAD A SHOT
AT THAT
PLANE!



THEY DISPERSED THE REMAINING WOUNDED MEN AND SENT THE GUARDS PROBING FORWARD INTO THE JUNGLE...



THE JUNGLE HAD GONE DEADLY QUIET. THE SMALL PARTY OF CHINDITS EASED FORWARD, COLONEL WAGNER WAVED THEM TO A HALT...



THERE WAS NOTHING TO DO BUT WATCH AND WAIT. SUDDENLY WAGNER POINTED UPWARDS...



BATTLER RAISED HIS RIFLE AND TRAINED IT ON THE DISTANT FIGURE. THE CRACK OF IT ECHOED THROUGH THE STILLNESS.



SECONDS LATER THE JAPS ATTACKED, CHARGING FANATICALLY THROUGH THE TREES...



THE CHINDITS FIRED VOLLEY AFTER VOLLEY INTO THE JAPANESE AND THE ATTACK FALTERED AND BROKE...



BATTLE'S FACE WAS GRIM AS HE FELL BACK WITH THE OTHERS...

SAM WENT OUT FIGHTING - I THINK HE'D HAVE WANTED IT THAT WAY.



THEY'RE BOUND TO ATTACK AGAIN IF THE PLANES COME IN. DO YOU WANT TO RISK THE AIRCRAFT, WING COMMANDER?

YES. I'M SURE THE PILOTS WILL BE WILLING TO TAKE THE CHANCE.



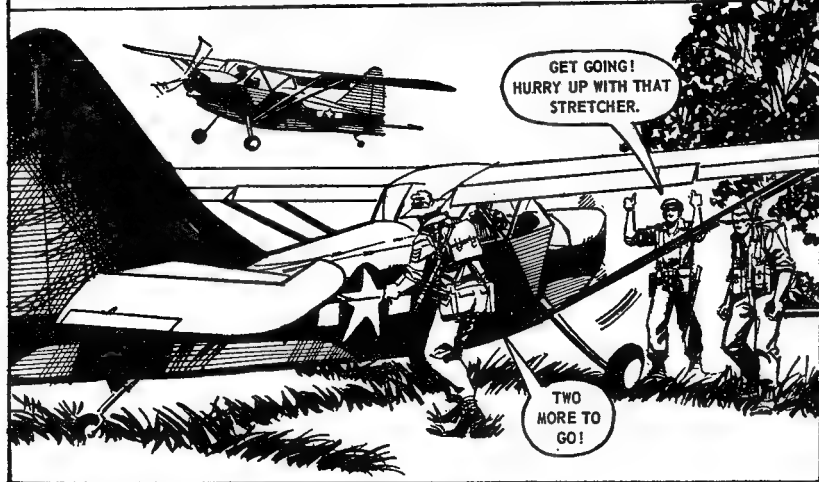
BATTLER KNEW THAT FOR THE SAKE OF THE WOUNDED THEY HAD TO TAKE THE RISK...



BY THE TIME THE L-5s CAME BACK EVERY MAN HAD HIS ORDERS. AT THE FIRST SOUND OF THEIR ENGINES BATTLER WAS SPEAKING URGENTLY TO THE PILOTS...



AS COLONEL WAGNER HAD FORECAST, THE JAPS ATTACKED AGAIN AS THE PLANES CAME IN. BUT THE CHINDIT PLATOON HELD THE ENEMY IN THE JUNGLE WHILE THEIR COMRADES WERE EVACUATED...



THE WOUNDED COLONEL WAS THE LAST MAN TO BOARD A PLANE. AS HE DID SO A JAP SOLDIER STEPPED FROM THE JUNGLE...



A BURST FROM THE SERGEANT'S STEN HAMMERED HOME AND THE JAP COLLAPSED IN A HEAP. BUT THE PILOT OF THE PLANE WAS ALREADY DEAD - AND THE INSTRUMENT PANEL WAS A SMOKING WRECK...



THE SERGEANT'S URGENT SHOUT MADE UP BATTLER'S MIND FOR HIM. HE WOULD NOT SACRIFICE A WOUNDED MAN AND A VALUABLE AIRCRAFT TO THE JAPS. HE JUMPED INTO THE FRONT SEAT AND OPENED THE THROTTLE...

GOOD
LUCK,
SERGEANT!

SEE
YOU IN
IMPHAL!

THE AIRCRAFT CLIMBED AWAY FROM THE STRIP...

IS THE
PLANE ALL
RIGHT?

WELL, THERE ISN'T
AN INSTRUMENT THAT'S
WORKING - SO THE FIRST
WE'LL KNOW OF TROUBLE IS
WHEN IT HAPPENS!

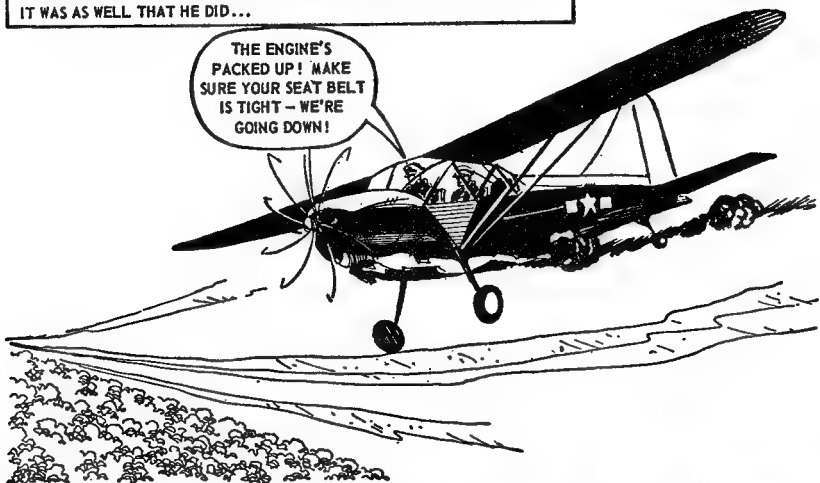
WITHOUT A COMPASS BATTLER HAD TO KEEP THE OTHERS IN SIGHT OR RISK LOSING HIMSELF...

I'VE GOT TO
KEEP LOW BUT IF
THE ENGINE CUTS - WE
WON'T HAVE A CHANCE.



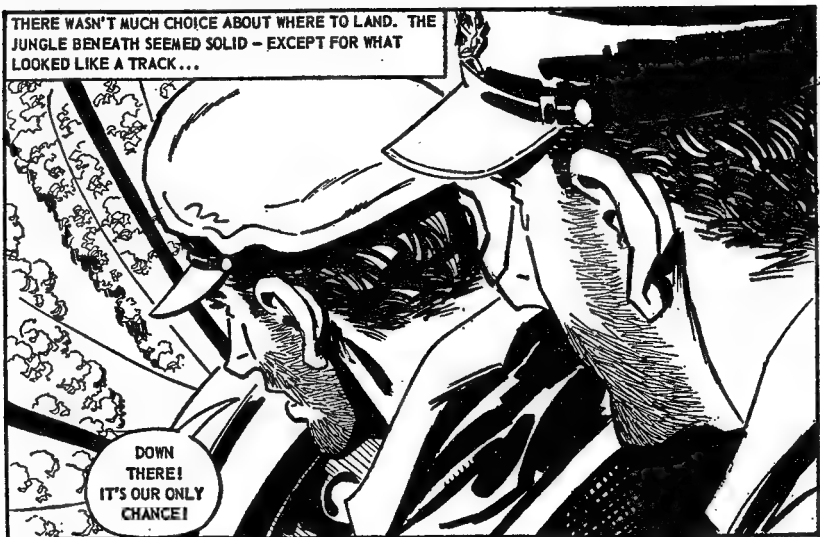
BATTLER FOUND THAT HE WAS DROPPING FARTHER BEHIND. FINALLY THE OTHERS WERE LOST TO VIEW AND HE DECIDED THAT HE HAD TO CLIMB. IT WAS AS WELL THAT HE DID...

THE ENGINE'S
PACKED UP! MAKE
SURE YOUR SEAT BELT
IS TIGHT - WE'RE
GOING DOWN!



THERE WASN'T MUCH CHOICE ABOUT WHERE TO LAND. THE JUNGLE BENEATH SEEMED SOLID - EXCEPT FOR WHAT LOOKED LIKE A TRACK...

DOWN
THERE!
IT'S OUR ONLY
CHANCE!



WITH FLAPS FULL DOWN BATTLETTOOK THE FLYING SPEED AS LOW AS HE DARED. HE AIMED FOR A SPOT BETWEEN TWO TREES, THEN HE FLICKED OFF THE IGNITION SWITCH TO CUT DOWN THE CHANCE OF FIRE...



THE SHATTERED AIRCRAFT DUG ITS NOSE INTO THE GROUND AND CART-WHEELED ALONG THE TRACK BEFORE COMING TO A HALT...



IT WAS SOME MINUTES BEFORE THEY MANAGED TO PULL THEMSELVES FROM THE CRUMPLED FUSELAGE. THEY PULLED OUT THEIR EQUIPMENT AND THEN SET FIRE TO THE WRECK...



LET'S
HOPE THE JAPS
THINK WE BURN'T
WITH IT!

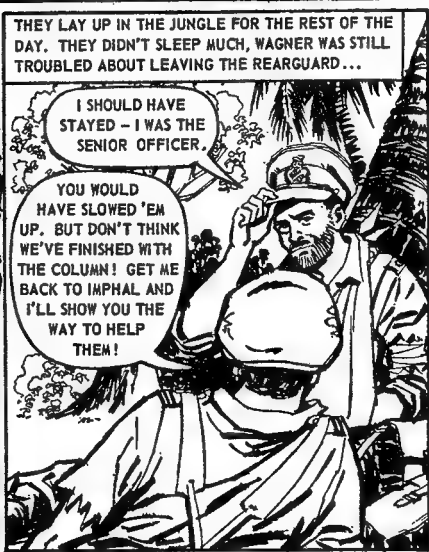
THEY FIXED THEIR POSITION AND WORKED OUT A ROUTE THAT WOULD BRING THEM TO SAFETY ...



IT WOULD BE
BEST IF WE SLEEP
BY DAY AND MARCH
BY MOONLIGHT.

RIGHT!
THE SOONER
WE GET OFF
THIS TRACK THE
BETTER.

THEY LAY UP IN THE JUNGLE FOR THE REST OF THE DAY. THEY DIDN'T SLEEP MUCH, WAGNER WAS STILL TROUBLED ABOUT LEAVING THE REARGUARD ...



I SHOULD HAVE
STAYED - I WAS THE
SENIOR OFFICER.

YOU WOULD
HAVE SLOWED 'EM
UP. BUT DON'T THINK
WE'VE FINISHED WITH
THE COLUMN! GET ME
BACK TO IMPHAL AND
I'LL SHOW YOU THE
WAY TO HELP
THEM!

MUCH OF THE LAND IN THE CHINDWIN VALLEY WAS OPEN, WITH TERRACES OF PADDY FIELDS STRETCHING FOR MILES. ACROSS THIS THE GOING WAS FAST - BUT DANGEROUS...



ONCE, WHEN THEY WERE SLEEPING UNDER COVER, THEY WOKE TO FIND A JAP PATROL HAD STOPPED ON THE TRACK BELOW THEM TO EAT...



WE COULD
DROP A GRENADE
RIGHT IN THE
MIDDLE OF
THEM.

AND MAYBE
MISS A FEW.
NO - IT'S MORE
IMPORTANT FOR US
TO GET BACK.

IT TOOK THEM THREE DAYS TO GET TO THE CHINDWIN RIVER AND WHILE THEY WERE LOOKING FOR SOME MEANS OF GETTING ACROSS THEY HEARD THE FAINT SPLASH OF PADDLES IN THE RIVER...



THEY WERE IN LUCK. IT WAS INDEED ONE OF THE FOURTEENTH ARMY'S FORWARD PATROLS, RECONNOITRING ACROSS THE RIVER. SOON THEY FOUND THEMSELVES BEING PADDLED TO SAFETY...



SOON THEY WERE IN A STAFF CAR BEING DRIVEN BACK TO IMPHAL...



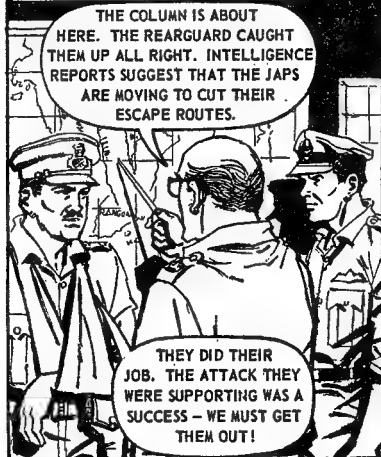
WAGNER WAS RIGHT: THE COLUMN HAD MANAGED TO AVOID THE JAPS BUT THE CEASELESS MARCHING, THE POOR DIET AND THE JUNGLE, THESE WERE ALL TAKING EFFECT...



A COUPLE OF THE MEN HAVE SORE FEET, SIR, IT'S ALL THESE STREAMS WE'VE BEEN GOING THROUGH - AND OF COURSE THEY'VE NOTHING DRY TO CHANGE INTO.

WELL WE MUST DO WHAT WE CAN.

AT THE OPERATIONS ROOM AT IMPHAL THEY WERE BECOMING INCREASINGLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE COLUMN...



THE COLUMN IS ABOUT HERE. THE REARGUARD CAUGHT THEM UP ALL RIGHT. INTELLIGENCE REPORTS SUGGEST THAT THE JAPS ARE MOVING TO CUT THEIR ESCAPE ROUTES.

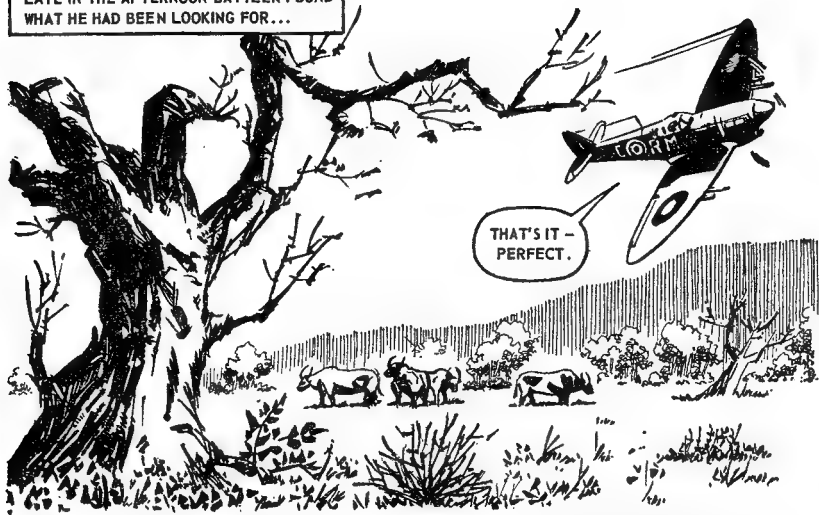
THEY DID THEIR JOB. THE ATTACK THEY WERE SUPPORTING WAS A SUCCESS - WE MUST GET THEM OUT!

THERE WERE TWO SPITFIRE SQUADRONS BASED AT IMPHAL. BATTLETT BORROWED ONE OF THEIR PLANES THE NEXT DAY. HE FLEW THREE SORTIES...



HE'S KEEN, ISN'T HE? ONE THING, THOUGH, HE WON'T COME TO MUCH HARM IN A SPITFIRE.

LATE IN THE AFTERNOON BATTLER FOUND
WHAT HE HAD BEEN LOOKING FOR...



BACK AT IMPHAL HE HURRIED TO SEE COLONEL
WAGNER...

MACLUSKY HAS SIGNALLED
THAT HE IS GOING TO DISPERSE
THE COLUMN INTO SMALL PARTIES
TO GIVE THEM A BETTER CHANCE
OF ESCAPING.

THERE'S A
BETTER WAY. CAN WE
GET IN TOUCH WITH
THEM?



BATTLER EXPLAINED HIS PLAN TO WAGNER - AND
THEN WITH WAGNER'S SUPPORT HE HAD TO SELL
HIS PLAN TO HIGHER COMMAND...

WE'VE
GOT FINAL
AUTHORITY TO
GO AHEAD!

JUST AS WELL!
WE'VE NEARLY FINISHED
LAYING IT ON. HELLO,
ALGY, BATTLER HERE.
I'VE GOT A LITTLE JOB
FOR YOU AND A COUPLE
OF VOLUNTEERS...



THE NEXT MORNING BRIGADIER MACLUSKY SENT A PATROL FORWARD TO THE OPEN COUNTRY THAT BATTLEER HAD FOUND...



AT ABOUT THE SAME TIME BATTLEER WAS BRIEFING ALGY...



BATTLEER TURNED TO THE NOW FIT COLONEL...



AT DAWN BRIGADIER MACLUSKY'S COLUMN WAS WAITING AS THE L-5s, LED BY ALGY, LANDED...



SUDDENLY TO THE EARS OF THE WEARY, JUNGLE-SICK MEN, CAME THE THROB OF AIRCRAFT ENGINES...



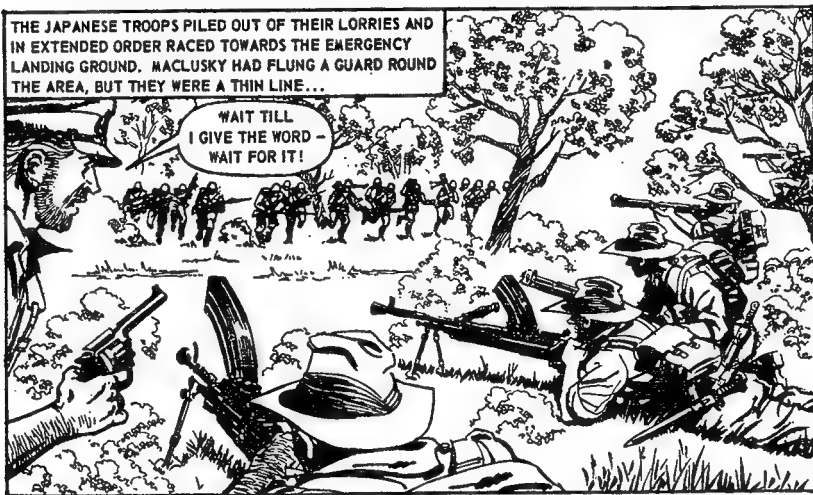
THE FIRST DAKOTA CIRCLED AND CAME IN. TROOPS WERE ALREADY CRAMMING INTO IT AS THE REST OF THE FLIGHT TOUCHED DOWN...



THEN THE JAPANESE REACTED. THEY HAD BEEN SYSTEMATICALLY BLOCKING OFF MACLUSKY'S ESCAPE ROUTES. NOW THEY REALISED THAT THEIR QUARRY MIGHT ESCAPE...



THE JAPANESE TROOPS PILED OUT OF THEIR LORRIES AND IN EXTENDED ORDER RACED TOWARDS THE EMERGENCY LANDING GROUND. MACLUSKY HAD FLUNG A GUARD ROUND THE AREA, BUT THEY WERE A THIN LINE...



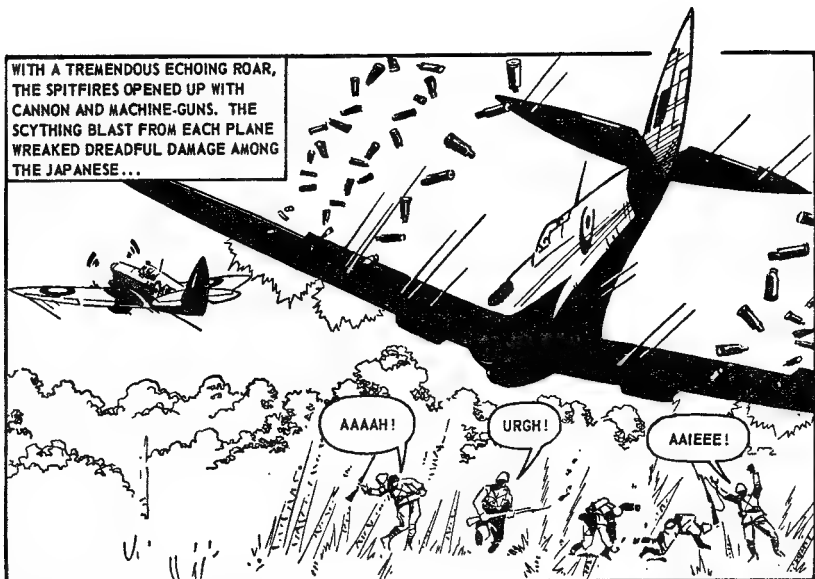
HIGH ABOVE THE LANDING GROUND,
A FLIGHT OF SPITFIRES PEELLED
OFF AND CAME HURTLING DOWN OUT
OF THE SKY, BATTLER BRITTON AT
THEIR HEAD...

ECHELON TO
PORT. PICK YOUR
TARGETS. FIRE AT
WILL. OVER.

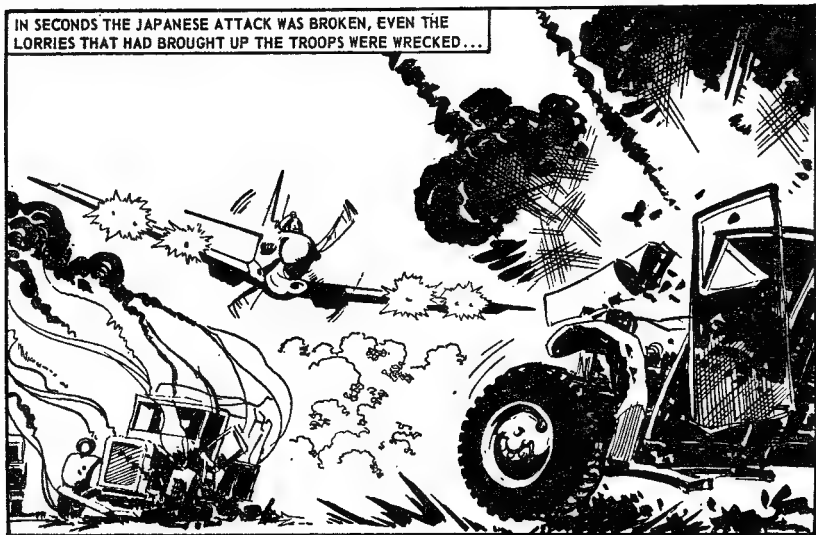
THE LINES OF THE TWO FORCES WERE EASY TO IDENTIFY FROM
THE AIR. THEY WERE IN THE OPEN WITHOUT COVER...

WE
COULDN'T
HAVE AN EASIER
TARGET...

WITH A TREMENDOUS ECHOING ROAR, THE SPITFIRES OPENED UP WITH CANNON AND MACHINE-GUNS. THE SCYTHING BLAST FROM EACH PLANE WREAKED DREADFUL DAMAGE AMONG THE JAPANESE...



IN SECONDS THE JAPANESE ATTACK WAS BROKEN, EVEN THE LORRIES THAT HAD BROUGHT UP THE TROOPS WERE WRECKED...



BUT THE JAPANESE WERE
NOT FINISHED YET...

HELLO, VULTURE
LEADER. JAPS INFILTRATING
THROUGH JUNGLE ON BEARING
TWO-ONE-ZERO.
OVER.



THE SLOW FLYING L-5 DIPPED BACK AND FORTH ACROSS
THE JUNGLE, SEARCHING OUT POCKETS OF THE ENEMY
FOR THE HARD-HITTING SPITFIRES...

THAT'S THE
STUFF! I'LL BET
THAT'S STOPPED THE
LITTLE BLIGHTERS!





ALL MORNING THE LUMBERING DAKOTAS CAME AND WENT. OF THE JAPANESE AIR FORCE THERE WAS NOT A SIGN, FOR AT DAWN EVERY JAPANESE AERODROME WITHIN STRIKING DISTANCE HAD BEEN ATTACKED WITH FIGHTER BOMBERS...

THAT SHOULD
KEEP THIS LOT QUIET
FOR A BIT.

AS THE LAST DAKOTA LIFTED FROM THE MAKE-SHIFT AIRFIELD, ONE OF THE L.5s LANDED TO PICK UP THE CONTROL OFFICER. THEN THEY ALL TURNED FOR HOME...



WE'VE
DONE IT! THEY'RE
ALL OUT!

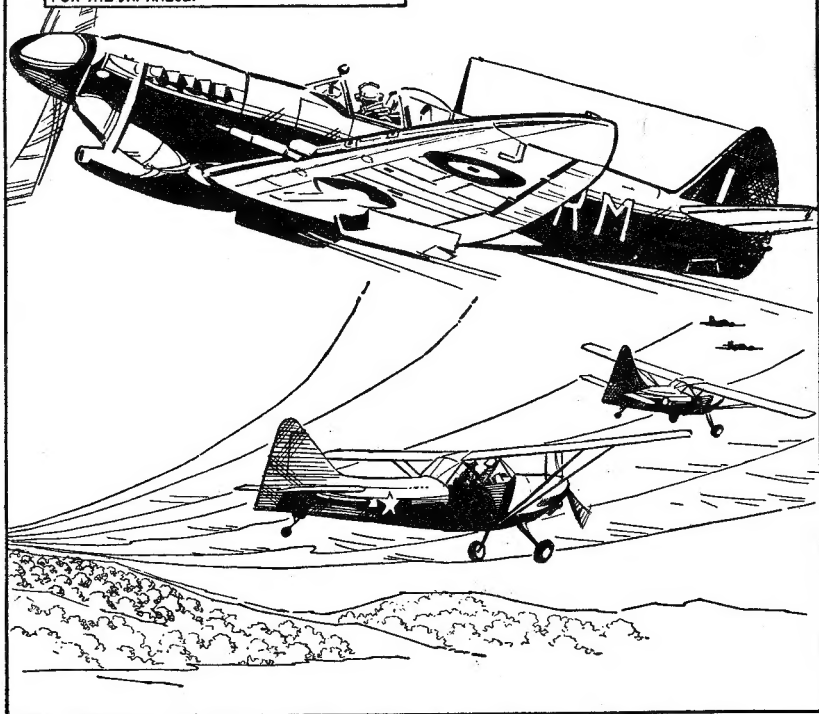
YES -
THERE GOES
SCOTTY.

BATTLER MADE SURE HE WAS THERE AT THE FINISH...



HELLO, BATTLER, THANKS
FOR THE VISIT. SEE YOU AT
BASE. THE COLONEL SAYS THE DRINKS
ARE ON HIM. OUT.

THE OPERATION WAS COMPLETE - AND HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL - THANKS TO THE CO-OPERATION OF THOSE WHO MARCHED AND THOSE WHO FLEW. THE JUNGLE OF BURMA POSED MANY PROBLEMS - THEIR SOLUTION WAS FOUND BY THE CLOSE INTERWEAVING OF AIR AND LAND OPERATIONS - AND THE RESULT WAS OVERWHELMING DEFEAT FOR THE JAPANESE.



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